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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 EUR-12 OES-07
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R 121647Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2676
INFO USIA WASHDC

[REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 7608

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AR, SOPN
SUBJECT: GOA REPRIMANDS LA NACION - PAPERS DEFEND FREEDOM
OF THE PRESS

1. THE GOA INFORMATION SECRETARIAT ON
OCTOBER 9 ISSUED A COMMUNIQUE EXPRESSING
ITS "DISPLEASURE" WITH THE NEWSPAPER
LA NACION FOR PUBLISHING AN ASSOCIATED
PRESS MOSCOW DATELINE STORY. THE AP
STORY, WHICH APPEARED OCTOBER 8, QUOTED
TASS AS SAYING THAT THE SOVIET TRAWLERS
CAPTURED BY THE ARGENTINE NAVY WERE
FISHING OUTSIDE THE 200-MILE LIMIT AND
ALLEGING THAT THERE ARE FORCES IN ARGENTINA
WHO WANT TO USE THIS INCIDENT "TO DESTROY
OUR SCIENTIFIC, COMMERCIAL, TECHNICAL AND
CULTURAL RELATIONS (WITH ARGENTINA)."
THE GOA COMMUNIQUE NOTED THAT "JOURNALISTIC
OBJECTIVITY, WHICH THE GOVERNMENT RESPECTS
AS A POSITIVE VALUE TO THE COMMUNITY, SHOULD NOT GIVE
RISE TO SITUATIONS IN WHICH AN ARGENTINE NEWSPAPER CAN
BEHAVE AS A MERE AND PASSIVE SPECTATOR IN MATTERS THAT

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AFFECT THE INTERESTS OF THE REPUBLIC."

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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
(X) Release () Excise () Deny
Exemptions(s):
Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full DEC 04 1980 L
() Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to
Date _____ Declassify on _____ Reason _____

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2. LA NACION REACTED OCTOBER 10 WITH A PAGE-ONE COMMENTARY ADDRESSED "TO OUR READERS" ON THE GOA COMMUNIQUE. IT TOOK EXCEPTION TO THE GOA'S ACCUSATION AND STRONGLY DEFENDED THE PAPER'S RECORD IN DEFENSE OF THE NATION'S INTERESTS. IT MENTIONED FOUR RECENT EDITORIALS SUPPORTING THE GOA POSITION REGARDING THE RUSSIAN TRAWLERS INCLUDING ONE ON OCTOBER 9 TITLED "RUSSIAN HYPOCRICY" WHICH DENOUNCED THE RUSSIAN GOVERNMENT FOR DISTORTING THE TRUTH.

3. OTHER PROMINENT BUENOS AIRES PAPERS CAME QUICKLY TO THE DEFENSE OF LA NACION. IN A STRONGLY WORDED EDITORIAL, LA PRENSA (OCT 12) CHARGED THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CENSURE OF LA NACION WAS YET "ANOTHER LAMENTABLE EPISODE IN A LONG HISTORY OF REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF FREEDOM OF THE PRESS BY VARIOUS GOVERNMENTS." THE EDITORIAL DECLARED THAT THE PRESS WAS RECOGNIZED UNDER THE ARGENTINE CONSTITUTION AS A "FOURTH POWER CONCEIVED TO CONTROL THE OTHER THREE" AND THUS COULD NOT BE LEGALLY CENSURED, PROHIBITED, INTERVENED OR CONTROLLED. IN CASE OF ANY CRIME, ONLY BY JUDICIAL ORDER CAN A MEDIA DIRECTOR BE ACCUSED, JUDGED AND PUNISHED, THE EDITORIAL SAID. IN ITS ACID CONCLUSION, LA PRENSA DECLARED THAT NOTHING WOULD BRING GREATER PRESTIGE THAN RESPECT FOR PRESS FREEDOMS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION AND THE UNIVERSAL LAW OF CIVILIZED NATIONS.

4. THE BA HERALD ALSO DEFENDED LA NACION, CLAIMING THAT IN MILITARY EYES, THE PRESS TENDS TO BE VIEWED AS A PROPAGANDA MACHINE. THE INCIDENT WAS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE AS IT WILL INCREASE THE TENDENCY TOWARD SELF-

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CENSORSHIP AND FURTHER INHIBIT EDITORS IN THEIR MISSION TO INFORM, CONCLUDED THE HERALD.

5. IN A SIMILAR INCIDENT, THE PRESS REPORTED THAT TWO DIRECTORS AND THREE RADIO NEWSMEN WERE DETAINED OCT 8. IN PUERTO MADRYN AFTER INTERVIEWING THE RUSSIAN "POLITICAL COMMISSAR" OF A SOVIET SHIP BEING HELD IN THAT CITY. THE BROADCAST MATERIAL ALLEGEDLY CARRIED COMMENTS BY THE RUSSIAN WHICH WERE CONSIDERED OFFENSIVE TO THE ARGENTINE NAVY. FOUR OF THE FIVE RADIO MEN WERE

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SUBSEQUENTLY RELEASED, AND LEGAL ACTION IS REPORTEDLY BEING CONSIDERED AGAINST THE NEWSMAN WHO CONDUCTED THE INTERVIEW.

6. COMMENT: THE INCIDENTS CLEARLY INDICATE THE OA'S (AND PARTICULARLY THE ARGENTINE NAVY'S) ACUTE SENSITIVITY ON MATTERS CONCERNING MILITARY PRESTIGE. IT ALSO REVEALS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE GOVERNMENT EXPECTS THE MEDIA TO FOLLOW THE ARMED FORCES PERCEPTION OF HOW AND WHAT NEWS SHOULD BE COVERED. THE IMMEDIATE RETORT BY THE RESPECTED LA PRENSA, WHICH VIRTUALLY ACCUSED THE GOVERNMENT OF UNCONSTITUTIONAL MUZZLING OF THE PRESS, DEMONSTRATES HOW QUICKLY SUCH ILL-CONSIDERED ACTIONS LIKE THIS BOOMERANG TO EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT.
END COMMENT.
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